



## **Office of the Mayor**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

**August 13, 2007**

**Noon**

### **After 9 months of labor, City Plan initiatives take shape**

*Contact: Mikki Dobski, Director of Communications & Special Projects, 235-5855 or 876-1564*

In the nine months that have passed since its adoption, City Plan has won a statewide award while several key initiatives are moving forward or showing concrete results, Mayor Stephen J. Luecke announced today.

City Plan, the most extensive comprehensive 20-year plan in South Bend's history, recently received from the Indiana Planning Association the IPA Hoosier Planning Award for Outstanding Plan for 2006.

"Residents of South Bend are using City Plan to discuss the future of their neighborhoods while governmental bodies are referring to the plan as they make decisions on the future growth and development of the City," the IPA noted when presenting the award. "The creation of City Plan was an ambitious, collaborative and spirited process."

Since the 2007 State of the City address, when Luecke issued five directives for staff to turn City Plan goals into concrete action, there has been progress on each directive. In addition, other dreams expressed in City Plan are taking shape. Citizen priorities are shaping the 2008 budget process. City crews reallocated time to open new "windows" on the St. Joseph River. Bike lanes and a new riverwalk have come online. Abandoned and derelict houses are beginning to come down. The Eddy Street Commons, a \$200 million mixed-use development, is moving to construction. And the Luecke administration's new strategy for the downtown will be presented Aug. 17 to the Redevelopment Commission.

"The award honors the important steps toward our shared vision that by 2025 South Bend will be a vibrant, caring city where residents and government celebrate our diversity and vitality," Luecke said. "City Plan represents the common vision of the entire community, and the progress reflects my administration's commitment to using the consensus that's been achieved to build a new South Bend together."

Although shaped around a 20-year window into South Bend's future, many City Plan objectives already are being implemented. Here is an update of their status, beginning with the mayor's five State of the City directives, which – although not necessarily the top City Plan priorities – reflected concerns that merited immediate action.

1. Begin engineering plans in 2007 to complete the riverwalk system in the entire length of the city from Logan Street to Darden Road within the first five years of City Plan implementation.

*PROGRESS: Phase 1 of the 1.75-mile Riverside Trail between Angela and Oakwood boulevards was completed. Design work for Phase 2, which will extend the trail to the Darden Road pedestrian bridge, is under way with completion expected in fall 2008. Engineers also are examining the most effective way to achieve a contiguous route along the St. Joseph River within the city limits.*

2. Establish 10 miles of bike paths annually – one major north-south and one major east-west path – in each of the next five years.

*PROGRESS: For 2007, the city identified 11.4 miles of striped lanes or signed paths in the spring along Ford Street, Mishawaka Avenue and Twyckenham Drive. City officials have been meeting with bicycling advocates and plan to announce anticipated routes for the remaining four years and 40 miles in the fall.*

3. Reduce vacant housing by 10 percent in the next three years by developing and implementing in 2007 a series of strategies to address the negative effects of abandoned housing and to set higher standards for the maintenance of vacant lots.

*PROGRESS: In May, city officials unveiled a comprehensive strategy to reduce abandoned housing by 72 percent and vacant housing by 20 percent. Contracts were authorized Aug. 3 with three nonprofits that will administer a \$1 home initiative with the first of 15 homes being raffled among credit-qualified homebuyers as early as October. The first demolitions of derelict abandoned houses are beginning this month.*

4. Bring public resources to strategic west-side areas and spur new investment and jobs by connecting the Airport Economic Development Area TIF (tax increment financing district) to the Sample-Ewing Development Area.

*PROGRESS: In July, the Redevelopment Commission approved the expansion of the Airport TIF to include LaSalle Square, the Marycrest/Hurwich area and the Sample-Ewing Development Area. The city has set aside \$1 million from the 2007 TIF budget for LaSalle Square and an additional \$500,000 annually for three years. LaSalle Square is considered the first priority for redevelopment from TIF resources.*

5. Convene community and business leaders to explore Bridges Out of Poverty as a strategy to lift families out of poverty in South Bend and St. Joseph County, recognizing the devastating and pervasive impact of poverty on individuals, families, neighborhoods and the community.

*PROGRESS: Growing out of a City Plan priority to provide opportunities for low-income residents, the Bridges Out of Poverty strategy has been introduced to other community groups, including all city managers, and plans are in place for introduction of the approach to the business community.*

The directives, however, represent only the most visible public window into the detailed City Plan objectives. Here is a list of other work toward City Plan priorities:

- As part of the 2008 budget process, city officials are incorporating City Plan benchmarks into an outcome-based budgeting process. The shift will enable the city to be more publicly transparent in its budgeting process and remain accountable to residents in meeting shared objectives. City Plan also will provide direction for program development, strategies and capital expenditures.
- On Aug. 17, Luecke and Jeff Gibney, interim director of Community and Economic Development, will introduce a new strategy for downtown development. Inspired by City Plan's vision, initiated by new departmental leadership and shaped by an ad-hoc group including public and private stakeholders, the strategy will create new dialogue about the vision for downtown. (Community participants in the City Plan process identified a comprehensive strategy for downtown as the top key issue for City Plan to address.)
- By the end of the month, crews from the city's parks and public works departments will have re-opened nine "Windows on the River." These 500-foot sections provide clear viewing points at strategic places along the St. Joseph River's 17 miles of riverbank in South Bend. City managers adjusted existing work plans to free staff time to address this City Plan concern. Work will conclude this fall on a 10<sup>th</sup> and final window for 2007. The program is expected to resume in 2008.
- The South Bend Department of Parks and Recreation is drafting its first natural resource management policy and activating a National Resource Advisory Team to guide stewardship of park properties. The team will identify park properties that require such management and whether a single, over-arching plan will apply to all identified parks and green spaces.
- Responding to a City Plan objectives for area-specific plans and encouraging planned-unit developments, the city guided and approved a plan for the \$200-million Eddy Street Commons, which includes commercial/retail and residential uses. The commercial development also will fund, through tax incremental financing, a \$15 million redevelopment of the "Triangle" section of the Northeast Neighborhood.
- The mayor has refocused an existing position in his office to concentrate on key City Plan priorities, including promoting city assets, developing a formal marketing strategy for the city and promoting the strengths of South Bend neighborhoods.
- As part of efforts identified in City Plan to recruit youth interested in police careers, South Bend police have expanded a middle-school education program to include a six-week GREAT (Gang Resistant Education And Training) program. Police have expanded a tennis program to include a women's program with 25-30 women, while the boxing program has grown to more than 85 participants with built-in educational tutoring. Police also have begun regular meetings with the Hispanic Focus Group, the Hispanic Business Alliance as well as a monthly ride-a-long with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of St. Joseph County.
- Seeking to address City Plan's call for integrated telecommunications infrastructure, South Bend police expanded radios to 800 MHC and worked in partnership with St. Joseph County to obtain a mobile command center.
- Responding to the objective of energy efficient practices, the public works department is overseeing the installation of light-emitting diode (LED) traffic signals, saving a projected \$1.9 million in avoided electrical cost.

City Plan was unanimously adopted Nov. 13, 2006, by the South Bend Common Council and Nov. 27, 2006 by the Area Plan Commission. The level of public participation in the process to create City Plan was unprecedented. More than 3,000 people participated in 48 public meetings during the three-year comprehensive planning process. The City Plan Civic Alliance, a coalition of three dozen community representatives, and city staff also conducted hundreds of smaller meetings with area experts and stakeholders on such topics as land use and transportation, infrastructure, housing and economic development.

South Bend's previous comprehensive plan was completed in 1961.

George Adler and Jitin Kain, members of the City Plan management team, received the award for City Plan on May 11 on behalf of the city from the Indiana Planning Association, a state chapter of the American Planning Association, a nonprofit public interest and research organization committed to urban, suburban, regional and rural planning.

The final version of City Plan, which is available online at [www.SouthBendCityPlan.org](http://www.SouthBendCityPlan.org), consists of 13 chapters that cover 10 key topic areas, an implementation plan as well as an introduction and a description of the local context that shaped the plan. The implementation plan identifies priorities for the first five years within eight broad strategies.